Interview with Jack Lydman

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR JACK LYDMAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is I am interviewing Ambassador Jack Lydman concerning his career in the Foreign Service. This interview is being done on behalf of the Foreign Service History Center and the Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Mr. Ambassador, how did you become interested in foreign affairs?

LYDMAN: Stuart, that goes back a long time, but I suppose the kickoff was World War II. Like everybody else, I became involved in the war which saved me from what was becoming an increasingly boring career in academe. I had been teaching at college for three and a half years and was fed to the teeth with the undergraduate mind, particularly the freshman mind; as a young instructor most of my students seemed to be freshmen.

Q: What were you teaching and where?

LYDMAN: I was teaching at Bard College, upstate New York. Bard was a bit like public school in England because the faculty was expected to teach anything to anybody at any time. My expertise was in European literature and languages. I had a couple of students who were studying Icelandic but many more who were studying German.

One of my students, who was studying advanced German with me, had a father who was a senior colonel in the United States Army Intelligence Corps. He had opened up an office in New York, the year before Pearl Harbor.

Q: So we're talking about 1940.

LYDMAN: He was working on the Germans in anticipation that eventually we were going to get into the European war. And he asked me if I would be interested in coming on. I jumped at it like a trout to bait. So there I was, working on the German canal system. But then came Pearl Harbor and immediately I was transformed from an expert on Germany to one on Japan because we became heir to all of the Japanese resources in the New York area. We had accumulated mountains of basic intelligence material on Japan and we also handled the debriefings of all of the refugees who came into New York on the Gripsholm.

Q: The Gripsholm was the Swedish ship that was exchanging diplomats between the warring countries?

LYDMAN: That's right. It carried Japanese to Japan and all kinds of people away from Japan, most of them Americans, everyone from Joseph Grew down to the barber in the American Club in Tokyo.

We found ourselves getting involved, almost immediately, in the air effort. Because after Pearl Harbor it was obvious that where we were, we were going to have to counterattack Japan by air. There was not going to be any early land-war possibility. One of the exciting things that I participated in early on was being a drafter of the basic target brief for the Jimmy Doolittle raid.

Q: This is early 1942?

LYDMAN: That's right. Half of Doolittle's group went down somewhere or another, but others made it to Manchuria. And it was very exciting because it demonstrated that we had the capacity to attack and it had an immense psychological effect.

I did targeting for quite some time and then finally moved to Washington where I worked with Australians in the Pentagon for about nine months. After that I went out to the Pacific where I was one of the briefers for the 20th Bomber Command in Guam. I spent the last year and a quarter of the war there.

Q: This was our Strategic Air under General Curtis LeMay?

LYDMAN: Yes and when LeMay left it was Spaatz and after that Nathan Twining. It was a very exciting period because we were working with increasing numbers of B-29s and their crews, and in a short time we were flying about a thousand planes every day against Japan. It was an exhausting job of briefing and post-analysis. We had a relatively small staff and it was a 16-18 hour day, seven days a week, and I was down to 130 pounds.

Anyway, the war ended. I got into the Bombing Survey. Paul Nitze recruited me.

Q: This was the strategic—?

LYDMAN: Bombing Survey in the Pacific, which was the flip side of the one that had already taken place in Europe. It was a determined effort to write the chronicle of how the enemy lost the war and how we won. I was put in charge of one of the major divisions, called the Urban Areas Division; the same division that George Ball headed in the European Survey. It was an exciting project, but one that caused me to lose most of my friends in the United States Air Force, because my conclusions were that the economic collapse of Japan was due much more to our Navy pig-boats than it was to strategic bombing.

Q: The pig-boats are the Navy's term for submarines?

LYDMAN: Yes.

Q: Then you reached basically the same conclusion—

LYDMAN: That we'd reached in Europe.

Q: That the resources put into bombing really are questionable.

LYDMAN: Quite right. But I feel I'm stringing out my response to your original question how I got involved in foreign affairs.

Q: But it gives a feel for your interest in the area.

LYDMAN: Indeed. I got back to Washington and was drafting my reports for the Bombing Survey at Gravelly Point in the old temporary Navy buildings over there. A delegation from the State Department came over and asked if I wouldn't be interested in spending six months on a task force being set up to work with the Far East Commission in Washington to determine what to do about Japan; how many calories per day were we going to permit the Japanese to eat, what were we going to permit them to produce, and generally how were we going to handle the Japanese problem post-war.

I should explain that I was then scheduled to be a trainee for management in the ALCOA Corporation in Montreal. I called the head of the company and asked if I could take six months off to help the State Department? He said, of course, that's good PR. So I started working and, you know, six months in government is about long enough to find out where the john is and where you hang your hat. Six months went by and nothing really had happened. And of course the State Department said, you can't go now, we've just started. I confess that I was intrigued by the problem and the environment, working with an international group out of the old Japanese embassy up on Massachusetts Avenue. I again called ALCOA and predictably their reply was to fish or cut bait. I really struggled with that decision. I called the State Department to register my reluctance to give up a

good career for another six month contract in the Department of State. The post-War personnel problems were difficult in the State Department. Temporary wartime people were being unloaded and others were being tenured. It was a kind of jungle warfare that was going on. Finally two days later I was offered a job without Civil Service tenure but with a declared intention to attempt to arrange it. I worried only momentarily about the ambiguity of the offer and told ACOLA and State that I would stick with State. Less than six months in the Far Eastern Commission it fell apart because it was clear that the Russians were not going to cooperate. The initial meeting in San Francisco on the United Nations underscored that fact any collaborative formulae to deal with Japan were clearly anachronistic. So the U.S. attitude towards Japan shifted overnight.

Q: One of the things, I was reading about the occupation of Japan and how MacArthur, and his staff, almost completely cut off contact with the Department of State—

LYDMAN: That's right.

Q: —or the Department of the Army at that time. In other words—

LYDMAN: I think that's quite true.

Q: In other words, rightly or wrongly he was going to do it his way and so anybody who was trying to work it from the Washington end, even to support him, got very short rations.

LYDMAN: There was no question that he was then regarded in the State Department as very much of an icon. The Department people who were assigned to him at the top level were definitely in a subordinate role. But I should emphasize that there was very little predisposition in the State Department to contest either MacArthur's judgment or administration.

I think perhaps it was wise not to contest the General. He had a good staff, some excellent economists, some good political people there who were advising him. And he himself

was thoughtful and with a sense of history. I think he probably did as well as almost anyone could have during that period. I have great respect for the way his occupation was handled.

Q: It seems to have been, by all accounts, a success. To move on, I notice from 1954 to 1955 you have been in the State Department doing research on Southeast Asia. By that time I take it you were amalgamated eventually into the Foreign Service?

LYDMAN: Yes, in '54, via the Wriston program. Let's see, I had just two or three jobs in the State Department. First I was a deputy head of Northeast Asian Research, then head of Southeast Asian Research for about four years, then Deputy Chief of OIR under Allen Evans, head of something called external research. I dealt with the outside academic community and other elements of government.

Q: This often has been a term used for dealing with the CIA.

LYDMAN: It involved some interface with the CIA at the time. Then for a year, in 1954, I was seconded to Nelson Rockefeller who was Special Assistant to President Eisenhower. I wrote reports for Nelson on international public opinion which went to the President. These were interesting reports, based on our won polling operations in Europe, because they had to be tailored for the President's reading in bed at night. They required inch and three-quarter borders on either side of the page. They had to be triple spaced, all in caps, and no relative clauses. Now for a Department Officer to be denied relative clauses was like removing his blood stream. But I learned how to do it and it became a useful tool later on when I had to write a lot of telegrams.

Q: Eisenhower did come from having been a staff officer who used to prepare these things. He was passing his tradecraft on to the rest of you.

LYDMAN: He was, indeed. The year with Rockefeller was great fun because that was when I got to know Henry Kissinger quite well. He was an assistant professor at Harvard

and was one of Nelson's stable of consultants. He worked rather intensively with us that year taking a major role in preparation of the first Rockefeller Brothers' report, it was for me a deep bath in our country's problems at the highest national security level. The report aimed to tell the President how to manage foreign affairs and the military post-War and what it was going to cost. It was an exhilarating experience for the relatively young, and in my case inexperienced, drafters since the report called for a complete transformation of the armed services and for extraordinary penetration in AID-type operations throughout the world. The trouble was that the price tag would have added something like $3 billion over a three-year period to the projected budget. And that was something that did not go over very well with the Eisenhower administration.

I can remember Nelson giving the report to the President during Christmas week, 1954, I guess it was, almost immediately that he was given the turn-down on it. Then Nelson resigned and we all had a Christmas farewell party at his house on Foxhall Road. We thought it was very short-sighted on the part of the White House to turn down this serious series of recommendations. That's when my abiding admiration and friendship for Nelson Rockefeller began. I always thought he would make a great President and was sorry that he got into a cul-de-sac as Vice President. That was not the role for him. But he was a remarkable public servant.

Q: I would like to return just very briefly. When you were dealing with Asian Affairs and were receiving intelligence reports on Asia from 1946 to '50.

LYDMAN: Indeed.

Q: How good was it? I'm speaking about what you were getting. And also the CIA component to this. Did we have a good apparatus or not do you think?

LYDMAN: I thought that the State Department's matrix of information, the usual reporting, despatch services, etc., throughout the Far East was first rate.

Q: These were from consuls—

LYDMAN: These were from the consulates and the embassies. There was at the time emphasis on reporting and on good reporting. And it was good reporting. The other, of course—most of the information that is of use, if you're attacking a problem in foreign affairs, is in the public domain. A the most useful source in research was the FBIS, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, which was a daily publication containing translations of radio broadcasts, and the news releases from all over the world. It was an extraordinarily rich and useful source.

Now that is the public domain. Then reporting from our own sources in the field gave you interpretations that were important. Not to downgrade covert information (some of it was first rate) but generally the rock of what you depended on were Departmental field reports and sources in the public domain.

Q: Returning to the time when you spent really the rest of your career, remarkably, sort of in one area in the Malaysia, Indonesia, Australian area, unlike almost any other career pattern I've seen of somebody who concentrated in an area normally not a matter of concentration in the Foreign Service.

LYDMAN: That's right.

Q: Your first assignment was in 1958 as Consul to Surabaya, Principal Officer there?

LYDMAN: No, that wasn't—my first assignment, in 1955 I was seconded as a Foreign Service Officer to the staff of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in Bangkok.

Q: SEATO?

LYDMAN: SEATO. A creation out of thin air by John Foster Dulles, in line with this grand goal to create alliance structures in which we would participate but which would

call forth the independent efforts of countries that were weak economically, vulnerable politically to independent pressures as well as to instability in their own structures and systems. His whole effort was to engage these countries in international efforts that had a goal of regional as well as their own security and that encouraged friendly alliances and relationships with Western countries. Previously colonialist countries sustained an adversarial image and adversarial relationships with most of the Southeast Asian countries. Dulles had courage and vision in putting together the SEATO organization. What was this quite outrageous collection of countries supposed to do together for their mutual security? You had Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, the United States. I was sent out to SEATO to be the Deputy in a division that was to be the research and intelligence arm of the SEATO organization. I was not to run the division, the head of it was a Pakistani and an old Indian civil servant type. He was from Assam and a poet in Persian among other things, a delightful Pakistani gentleman of about 60 years, and cosmopolitan. When we first met, he said, “Jack, I expect you to do all the work and run this thing.” Then he said, “All I want you to do, if you will, is to bring in the minute every morning at, shall we say 10:00 AM? I'd like to see the minute daily and I will initial it.”

Q: The minute was what we would more likely call the agenda of the day?

LYDMAN: The agenda, that's right. Any problems, etc., were in the minute. A sort of loose-leaf folder in columns. That's the way he was used to do ding business in the Indian Civil Service. He would sign the Minute very solemnly, say, “Thank you very much, Jack”, and then go off and play golf. A delightful man. I liked him a great deal.

But anyway, I started with a three-week old copy of the New York Times. That was my resource when I arrived. But in about three weeks I accumulated a staff of about 35 people, completely mixed by countries of origin. I got a deputy who was an Australian and very bright. We had our pick of lovely Thai girls as secretaries and clerks and within I guess two months we were putting out a daily intelligence bulletin, which was really not too bad. It was based for the most part on public sources and some on lowly classified

information. I got a stream of stuff not only from the United States but from Australia, the U.K. and France. We had a good little thing there, teaching young Thai and Filipinos officers how to analyze, what was important, why it was important, how to select subjects, and finally what to bring to the attention of people responsible for policy and operations.

I spent two and a half years there and enjoyed every minute of it. It was a unique introduction to the psychology of people who were eager in many ways to pattern themselves and their actions on Western models. Most of my staff were career army or police officers. They had been placed in their assignments to learn and to transmit what they were learning to their services. What became clear as time went on, was their realization that not all of the answers were the privilege of people in the West. They began to see where things were faulty in the analyses of the West and that they had just as good basis to judge problems as anybody else. I look back at that period as a kind of microcosm of the awakening of Southeast Asians to their own worth.

Another thing that was interesting at SEATO was to observe the cynicism of some of the Westerners. Their colonial lives had ended and they were going along for the ride, for European purposes, essentially, Atlantic Alliance purposes, or for probing commercial advantage in future. For them to focus on regional security was not very successful. But the facade was maintained for a good many years, as you know.

Q: Going now to the time you went to Indonesia where you were to serve from 1958 to 1960 as the Consul in Surabaya.

LYDMAN: Yes.

Q: And then as the Economic Counselor in Jakarta from 1960 to '62. First, what was our consulate doing at the time? Surabaya is in Sumatra, is that right?

LYDMAN: No, no. Surabaya is in East Java.

Q: East Java.

LYDMAN: It was a rather key consulate at the time because one of the principal preoccupations of the American mission in Indonesia was tracking the strength of the Indonesian Communist Party. Surabaya happened to be the center of strength for the Indonesian Communist Party.

Q: That's the PKI?

LYDMAN: The PKI (Partai Kommunist Indonesia). The mayor and the city council of the city of Surabaya, which is the second largest city in Indonesia, was Communist. And it was felt important that the consulate keep its eye just as firmly as possible on what was going on in East Java and in Surabaya. It was a very active reporting post. The Consular corps was a kind of East-West package. The Russian Consul had managed to have himself raised to the position of Consul General so that he became dean of the corps. Then you had a Czech Consul, who was a mirror image of the Russian and you had a Japanese Consul, an Indian Consul, a British Consul, and myself. It was rather a fascinating time to watch the kind of pavane that went back and forth between President Sukarno, the PKI center in Djakarta and the PKI in Surabaya. While I was there, there were two important state visits, by Khrushchev, the first time a Russian premier had ever been to Indonesia, and Uncle Ho, Ho Chi Minh. Both of these were major occasions for the PKI to rally the faithful and put on display the strengths and appeals of Marxism.

The mayor of Surabaya was a Communist but also a Dutch-trained psychiatrist. Delightful little fellow. I liked him a great deal. He was married to a woman much taller than he was, big woman, a devout Roman Catholic in charge of Catholic welfare for the diocese. All very Indonesian.

Q: Let me ask—this was a time when we hadn't learned, you might say, to live as easily as we have today with many of the Communist manifestations abroad, but were you under any instructions? I mean, how did you deal with it? Was it a problem?

LYDMAN: No. As a matter of fact, I pretty much wrote my own book. We flooded the embassy and the Department with reporting.

Once in the while the Political Counselor would come up from Djakarta and say, my God, I haven't time to read anything except what you're sending from Surabaya. But nobody asked us to cut it down.

Q: What were we able to do there? As the Consul, what could you do other than report? I mean, were you able to establish American credentials?

LYDMAN: We concentrated on important non-Communist and anti-Communist groups, particularly the Army and Navy. The Navy had its biggest naval base in Surabaya. It had been somewhat contaminated by Marxism and it was a very important target for us.

Q: Khrushchev brought a nice cruiser there, didn't he, and gave to the Indonesians?

LYDMAN: Not at the time of his visit. But a lot of their principal craft came from the Russians, submarines, as well as other ships. The Army was an extraordinarily important target for us because we felt it was the principal barrier to a Communist takeover in Indonesia. We felt that right up to the time of the coup in 1965.

Q: When Suharto, leading the Army, took over.

LYDMAN: Yes.

Q: But was our role with the Army tainted by the fact that we were accused of helping with the, what was it the outer island rebellion, at the time? I mean, we were giving support to some of the rebels on Timor and Sumatra and Borneo and the Celebes.

LYDMAN: Oh, I think those were temporary embarrassments. I wouldn't put them in any more important context than that. And also you must remember that the question of Islam, which was at the basis of that rebellion, was very much an issue in the Army itself. Many of the Army generals and higher officers were in sympathy with the Dar Islam movement. So this wasn't just a we and they thing. It was a complex mix within the society. I don't think it really hurt us a great deal. I think it hurt us particularly with Sukarno who felt that that sort of gamesmanship was aimed directly at him. But the important element in those days was our Ambassador.

Q: Howard Jones?

LYDMAN: Howard Jones. He became controversial. I had respect for him because I felt he clearly saw what the role of the U.S. embassy had to be in those very delicate and difficult years. The problem for Howard was to make it difficult for Sukarno to break relations with the United States or to create a situation in which the United States would break relations with Indonesia.

Q: I would like to move on to this because eventually we want to keep moving, but you went to the embassy in 1960—

LYDMAN: '60.

Q: As Economic Counselor? And you did work under eventually two quite different Ambassadors, Howard Jones and Marshall Green.

LYDMAN: Indeed.

Q: Could you describe Howard Jones' operating style and what his goals were when you were there, at that time.

LYDMAN: I've just given you some indication of what his principal goal was. His operating style was very much what one would call intimate association with as many of the top Indonesians as he possibly could maintain, particularly with the President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the other top ministers. Howard would spend most of his waking hours figuring out how he could meet with, talk with, and deal with, these top people in government, not only during the week but frequently on weekends in the mountains where the Ambassador had a summer house. It was important to try to get up there for a few hours on a weekend because it meant a change in climate and the luxury of being able to sleep without air conditioning for a night. Howard Jones was getting on in years, as was his wife, and they needed that sort of break. So he would try if at all possible to get up there. Well, he'd get up there and then the first thing you would have would be a call from Howard to those of us who were in attendance on the Ambassador. We all had to be at hand.

Q: This is Tape 1, Side 2 of an interview with Ambassador Jack Lydman.

LYDMAN: Sure enough I would get a call from him, saying , “Jack, I'd like you to come along with me. We're going to find Subandrio.” (the Foreign Minister) There always seemed to be some problem that Howard thought necessary to get to the Foreign Minister or to the President. Well, you would find yourself riding around the country for hours with Howard Jones, chasing down the Indonesian government. But that was Howard Jones' style.

Q: All right. Let's say he caught the Foreign Minister. What would he do?

LYDMAN: He was a fantastic reporter. He had had a long career in the newspaper business at one time. He had run 23 newspapers in the Middle West. He would have these

meetings and there wasn't a day that went by without a message from Howard to the Secretary, “I saw Sukarno this morning, etc..”. It was what one could call a continuing soap opera on Indonesian-American affairs. But it was a fantastic job of reporting.

Q: On this, you mentioned several times drafting cables and all. And in the Foreign Service this is considered the sublime art, if you are a good drafter.

LYDMAN: Yes.

Q: What's the result of this? I mean, obviously you'd look at the top people in our Executive and Indonesia rarely raises its head. Except in an absolute crisis, Indonesia is something that we'd almost rather forget about, albeit it's an important, large country and all that. Do you think that Howard Jones' reporting was effective?

LYDMAN: I do. I don't agree with your initial premise. At that time Indonesia was considered immensely important. This was the Dulles period, you must remember, with the idea of forming some kind of a strategic complex for Southeast Asia. Everyone took this seriously. For example, we had an AID program for Indonesia that was large and extensive. We considered this country to be a vital anchor for the strategic defense of the South Pacific. There was no question that this had high priority in Washington during this time. Howard Jones knew this. What he constantly fought against was a tendency on the part of bureaucrats in Washington to write off Sukarno as a Southeast Asian romantic nut with personal peccadillos that most red-blooded Americans couldn't stand. I mean, his womanizing, prancing around, posturing, misuse of history. All of this just put shivers through most red-blooded bureaucrats in Washington. And Howard had to protect this weird Southeast Asian figure from being rubbed out by various impulses for derision. Now Howard I think did a good job of this. It was not just technique, it was because he felt it was vital to his principal effort to keep the American-Indonesian dialogue going as healthily as he possibly could. And that was the job as he saw it.

Q: You're saying that sometimes seen in contrast, to some impressions of Howard Jones is that he was a man who would do anything to stay on friendly terms. What you're saying was a policy consideration rather than being what would be considered too soft on Sukarno and our policy should have been firmer. You feel that a firmer policy probably would not have worked.

LYDMAN: I think it would have run the risk of being counterproductive. You know, there are shadings all the way along. If one would say, yes, perhaps a little bit more muscle from time to time might have been better. If you look at this by hindsight, sure you can say that. But you're talking about shadings. You're not really talking about mainstream of policy the way he was trying to implement it. On balance, I think he did absolutely right. I have the highest regard for him and the greatest respect. He was an immensely hard-working Ambassador. He gave unstintingly of himself. He had very little amour propre except what was necessary for his posture in that government and with that government. I'm not one of Howard's detractors at all.

Q: You were the Economic Counselor. What were your responsibilities?

LYDMAN: That was a very exciting period because it was the time when we were really launching an enormous AID program. This was the Kennedy years, you know. An economic task force group came out, sent out by Kennedy himself, to try to figure out what to do about Indonesia. And we were going to be the principal donor. I don't know how many AID officers we had. I think at one time we had 389. My job was to closely monitor this huge AID mission and, to keep the Ambassador informed, and to provide policy guidance to the AID mission.

The AID building was almost adjacent to the embassy. I spent a good deal of time in assessing how the program was going, where it was focusing, whether it was working or not. And also tried to figure out how it was impacting on the communities in Indonesia which we were flooding places with AID people.

I got to be, I'm afraid, somewhat of a hair shirt, but I think it was probably my function to be the hair shirt.

Q: The Ambassador wanted you to be somewhat the devil's advocate?

LYDMAN: He did.

Q: —reporter. How did he view the AID man, more as an advocate of just more AID?

LYDMAN: Not necessarily. He and the AID man got along very well together. The AID was Allen, who had been the former Chancellor of the University of California, very distinguished American, by training a urologist. He was not an economist, but he was a man who had run things very well. He had a back-up staff of more orthodox AID types, economists and bureaucrats who knew the AID business.

I got along very well with Allen. He was a very good bureaucrat. He knew how never to confront. He knew always how to bend and to compromise but usually he would come out getting much of his own way. I had great regard and respect for him in that way.

My problem with big AID missions was I felt we had over-bureaucratized the function. It became more of a vehicle for the employment of X numbers of American AID officers than it was a purposeful what I call program aimed at correcting problems or helping the development process. I became hardnosed about AID during those years. There were only two years, mind you, that I was there. But I really came out with a sour taste about the whole process. I felt (a) we were not only wasting a lot of our own resources, (b) we were creating an almost intolerable political impact by the saturation of these countries and their economic processes by this rag-tailed group of Americans, most of whom I learned not to respect overly for their expertise.

Q: This of course is a question. Frankly I share your feeling towards this. But what were we doing? I know the Soviets were sort of coming in with the usual steel mill, stadium.

LYDMAN: Right. It was very competitive. We had lots of money in those days, we could generate this kind of program without too much of an impact on the American taxpayer. What we were attempting to do was to convince the Indonesians that what we were doing was helping their development process in contrast to the Russian program of simply putting a fancy stadium in Djakarta.

But when you burgeon with the numbers of people and numbers of programs that we were ending up with in my time there, '60 to '62, you begin to lose sight of the main purpose. And in fact you then began to generate negative effects.

Q: What type of negative effects were there?

LYDMAN: I thought they were negative because first of all you put the Indonesians into a posture that they could get anything they wanted if they just asked for it. That was one negative effect. Another was that the proliferation of the AID program—we were doing things like setting up a domestic merchant marine academy. We had a thing going out in the lesser Sundas where we were building boats for long-line tuna fishing, not realizing that this was something that was simply not going to be done because Indonesians never would do this traditionally. They don't fish that way. Not only that, if you build these boats, who is going to maintain them? I mean, the first time you knock an engine out, where do you get the replacement? Many of our projects were frankly ill-conceived.

We had people going out trying to improve the growing of cotton. Cotton is a meaningless cipher in the agriculture of Indonesia. It wouldn't matter if they never grew a cotton boll because it's not a crop for them.

Q: We happened to have a cotton expert?

LYDMAN: We happened to have a cotton expert. And you know that's what happens. We were doing everything. We were upgrading how they made batiks. Can you imagine?

Americans going over to teach the Indonesians how to upgrade their batiks! This got to be absurd.

Q: Were you able to have contact with Indonesians who were also telling you this? Or were they just sitting back and saying, send more money, the people you dealt with?

LYDMAN: At that time really discerning Indonesians were not much in evidence. University trained scientists were still in school, most in the United States. When I got back in '66 as Deputy to Marshall most had come back.

Q: This is Marshall Green?

LYDMAN: Marshall Green. You know, it was a wonderful opportunity because we had a new shake, Marshall and I, really I think together helped to map out a new AID strategy. The last thing we ever wanted to do was to commit the United States to a big bilateral AID program in Indonesia. How were we going to avoid that? We had conversations with Washington, people we knew, and with some of these new Indonesians who had come back.

Q: By the way, we're speaking about the period of—?

LYDMAN: '66 to '69.

Q: '66 to '69, Indonesia under Ambassador Marshall Green.

LYDMAN: That's right. We decided we were going to try to arrange an international assistance effort under the umbrella of the World Bank. Marshall and I both agreed nobody loves Santa Claus; we were not going to be Santa Claus in this business. We were not going to be primus inter pares only one among many and that was it.

Well, this thing worked and it has worked ever since. And it's not only worked there, but it's a model for the Philippines and I believe Pakistan, among others. And it got us off the hook

because all we did then was to contribute to the multilateral aid effort where we had very few people, at least we hoped would be very few. After the coup in 1965 the embassy had been pared down to 25 or 30 people. Glorious. Absolutely glorious. So Marshall and I said we will not let them pass, we are not going to get a new Embassy/AID bureaucracy here of great numbers.

We succeeded first in keeping it down to, I don't know, 19 or 20 people. But you know, it's like a creeping disease, by the time I left in '69 I guess that mission was up to 150 or something like that.

Q: We'll come to Australia a little later, but why don't we continue with Indonesia for the time being. What was the situation in Indonesia when you came back in 1966?

LYDMAN: You mean the political situation?

Q: Political situation. When you came back as the Deputy Chief of Mission.

LYDMAN: Of course they had had the big crisis, that had happened before I came back. I arrived in October and the big crisis was in September 1965. What had happened was the attempt on the part of the Indonesian PKI which thought that it was in a position to seize power. The history of the period indicates that the Chinese government was certainly implicated in this effort, but how much of a participant they were is still I think somewhat hazy. Several members of the Indonesian government were involved, certainly several of the ministers. Good slices of the police, the Navy, the Marines were also involved. The Foreign Minister was involved. And of course Sukarno was involved. And the evidence is fairly strong that he certainly, if not in charge of the grand design at least went along with it.

The game was saved, as you know, in typical Javanese fashion by this relatively obscure general who just happened to be in a position to rally enough forces to put down the main thrust of the coup in Djakarta.

Q: We're talking about Suharto.

LYDMAN: Suharto. The coup could very well have succeeded. Now, what was at stake here? I don't know whether you know Bob Martens. Bob has written what I think is an absolutely fascinating analysis of the time— his thesis is that the coup was the culmination of a long series of programed moves on the part of Sukarno who was a dedicated Socialist from the very beginning.

Not everybody will agree with that thesis. As a matter of fact, I have some difficulty in buying it completely although I think it's valid and certainly ought to be considered. Prior to the coup, the military had been the principal anti-Communist element. The military wanted power; the Communists wanted power. the conflict had less to do with ideology than led the razzia against all elements that were in any degree tainted ideologically.

Q: Razzia being?

LYDMAN: This was a sweep of the Communist elements in the country. Nobody knows how many people were killed in those days, but it was enormous.

Q: One hears tremendous numbers bandied about, but at the same time in an interview with Marshall Green he says that really there wasn't much evidence that was available to us, except that we heard these stories.

LYDMAN: That's right. There wasn't enough evidence because we didn't have our people out in the places where the nightly massacres were taking place. What happened was that every night Army trucks would cover the countryside with hit lists of people to be picked up. And they would be picked up, in villages outside of villages, in the rural areas for the most part. Also this happened in cities. Then they were gathered together in slaughter points and they would be eliminated that same night. And this went on night after night.For

example on Bali many Balinese friends reported particularly brutal executions because of a rather heavy infestation of the PKI in Balinese villages.

Q: Let's move to being a DCM. How did Marshall Green use you as a DCM?

LYDMAN: From the perspective of a DCM, Marshall was an excellent Ambassador. He let the DCM really manage the embassy, and I did. I rode herd on all the elements including the AID mission, everything else. Marshall had excellent contacts with all the top people in the Indonesian government. He was also very receptive to suggestions from me and others as to who he should see and why. He was a great reporting officer himself, a great draftsman. Very good representationally. Awfully good with his diplomatic colleagues, with the Indians, the Brits, the Pakistani. One thing that Marshall appreciated was that you get an awful lot from your diplomatic colleagues, and don't ignore them. I admired that. Marshall did that much more successfully than Howard Jones, for example. Howard was much more of a loner in the diplomatic service. But Marshall was excellent. He really kept his network going there.

In the embassy, we had a daily staff meeting at 9:00 in the morning attended by every major element of the embassy, never less than 15 to 20 people. Marshall would head the table and I would read the agenda and run the meeting for him. He would indulge in the give and take, make suggestions, give orders, vent whatever happened to be on his mind.

Q: A question that I would like to ask. I speak as a former, basically Professional Consular Officer. How was your consular section used? Or was it used?

LYDMAN: Well, the usual consular functions. We had a pretty heavy load, although nothing in comparison with, let's say, Singapore or Hong Kong where you had tan is enormous Chinese immigration problem. I think we had, as I recall, a Consul and two Vice Consuls in Djakarta. And then local employees, not very many. It wasn't that active a section.

Q: You didn't have much in the way of Americans in trouble and things like that?

LYDMAN: Very few. And, I'll tell you, if we had Americans in trouble it was normally of a variety that other than consular people were handling it. For example, we had a well-known horn player who came on one of the USIA programs with his group. I can't remember his name now, I should but I'm not very much of a jazz sort of person. He gave two or three concerts in Djakarta very successfully. The Indonesians adored him. He came with his wife, by the way.

Then he left his wife and the group in Djakarta and went off to Surabaya, not to play but just went off to see. He apparently had hooked up with one of the very attractive ladies who was working in the palace with Sukarno as an assistant press officer. The two apparently had a lovely weekend in Surabaya. But he made the egregious blunder of taking photographs of the two of them in what one would call suggestive postures. He was being tagged by the local security people, they finally put the arm on him and confiscated his film. Well, when that was developed, of course, it came to the attention of Sukarno—I mean, this was one of the girls from his harem. So this guy was clapped in jail. Boom. He could have been there for the rest of time. So Ambassador Jones, said, “Jack, you better handle this.” So, you know, I got to see the horn player and they had him in protective custody, but definitely he was being contained. I had to bring in care packages. Then I had to negotiate with the Indonesian government and convince them that the best way to get rid of this annoyance was to get the guy the hell out of the country as fast as possible. Well, I'll tell you, the President just wasn't about to buy that. He was going to let this fellow rot in jail.

And you know this thing went on for—the guy's wife left and the group left, for about three or four weeks. I'd have to report to the Ambassador, I'd say, “Mr. Ambassador, I don't really see this thing—”. So Howard would say, “Well, we're doing our best”. He said, “I'm getting all kinds of rockets from Washington about this.” And I said, “Let me keep trying.”

Finally one day I got over to the head of the American desk (Max Maramis who had been the press officer for Sukarno in the Bandung conference) and said, “Max, why don't you go and see Sukarno and say you've been thinking this one over and you've been talking and you really don't see any way out of it except to get rid of this guy forget about it. Well, you know, he did. Sukarno very reluctantly agreed. He said, “You tell Howard Jones, get this son of a bitch out of the country by 8:00 tomorrow morning.” So Maramis got on the phone to me and I reported to the Ambassador. The Ambassador said, “Is there any plane going?” I said, “I don't think there's a plane.” He said, “Get the Naval Attach#.” And we got the Navy Attach# and his old DC-3 and, we carted the hornplayer over to Singapore at 8:00 in the morning.

Q: Turning from here and working with Indonesia both as Economic Counselor and DCM, you were in Australia, in Canberra, from 1963 to 1966 as DCM. And there you really worked under a different type of Ambassador.

LYDMAN: Two political appointees, yes.

Q: How did you operate under people who really weren't very familiar with the diplomatic world?

LYDMAN: That really wasn't terribly difficult. The first Ambassador was Bill Battle, who was from Virginia. His father had been governor of Virginia a distinguished Democrat. Bill was a rather strong Kennedy man and Kennedy personally put Bill in the job as Ambassador to Australia. Bill was a lawyer by profession. He was a man in his early 40s I guess at that time, with a very attractive wife, a very attractive couple in every way. They were excellent representational Americans. They had all of what you'd call the presence that you would want a young American Ambassador to have.

I was his Deputy. He'd had a previous Deputy before I arrived. I succeeded Bill Belton whom you probably have met. Belton left on rotation and then I came aboard. The

DCM was expected to run the embassy and the consulates. We had five, including two consulates general. The big consular operation in Australia, took quite a bit of supervisory time, just getting around from Canberra to Perth, or from Canberra to Brisbane or Canberra to Adelaide was a bit of a hop. So you had to do quite a lot of squirreling on the consular side.

The embassy was not an overly busy one because we had no AID program, for example, in Australia. But we had a rather important scientific research program, up to $3-1/2 million a year in grants from NIH and other places in the U.S. government that were funneling into various universities, etc. in Australia. We had a scientific attach# when I was there named Paul Siple, rather well-known American type, who was riding herd on that. We had a very active mutual defense arrangement which took a lot of redefining, reinterpreting, re-agreeing all the time, with a constant series of conferences with the Australian government. We had mutual projects with the Australian government that were confidential between governments and from time to time would hit the fan in the Australian press and require managing. The damage control was not terribly difficult, but on the other hand you had to be alert to these things.

Politically of course it was a stable time because Sir Robert Menzies was still Prime Minister. It was the time of the Conservative Party coalition with the Country Party. The economic scene was stable and in fact improving and the strident voice of Australian labor was somewhat modulated. We didn't really have much problem there. You had in Australia a kind of undertow of anti-Americanism that was really an extension of the kind of anti-establishment views that are embedded in the Australian community. They have the same thing with their own government and their own establishment. Someone once suggested it really is a survival of the convict mentality which builds an adversarial response, almost Pavlovian, to management, to the establishment, to authority. And that extended over to us among certain groups in Australia. But it wasn't anything that was ever any trouble. The

basic pro-Americanism in Australia was palpable all in all circles and it was a wonderful place to be because you felt terribly welcome wherever you were.

Q: Did the Vietnam war play much of a role there in our relations?

LYDMAN: It was an irritant, let's put it that way. But on the other hand the Australians at that period, and particularly under Robert Menzies' government, were inclined to be highly supportive. If anything they would I think have preferred, and much of the Australian community would have preferred a much stronger American response to the Vietnam situation, even involving a greater commitment on the part of the Australians.

The thing that bothered them more than Vietnam was the confrontation that Sukarno's Indonesia had started against Malaysia. You must remember that.

Q: This is the confrontation really, in what would you call Eastern Malaysia?

LYDMAN: The British had announced, right after World War II, that they were getting out east of Suez and they were going to liquidate their empire. Well, they liquidated Malaya, which became the Federation of Malaya, in 1957. And they gave autonomy to Singapore in '59. But they maintained two British colonies in Borneo in East Malaysia—that was what they called North Borneo at the time and Sarawak—and they had a protectorate role in the Sultanate of Brunei. In 1963 they had persuaded Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman and Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore and North Borneo and Sarawak to become a larger Federation of Malaysia. Brunei did not go into this because they wanted to maintain their independence for a lot of reasons, mostly personal on the part of the old Sultan who was running it at the time.

However, Sukarno took violent exception to the deal, claiming that it was simply a gambit on the part of the British to maintain colonial rule and influence in Southeast Asia, he was not going to stand for it. So he initiated what one would call an undeclared war against Malaysia.

This triggered the Five Power Agreement which was a defense and security arrangement that involved the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaya. The Australians and New Zealanders had troops, as did the U.K., in Malaya, in the colonies of North Borneo, fighting the Indonesians from 1963 on. Now the Australians were concerned about this because they were at war, really, even though it wasn't declared, with the Indonesians. So it was a question of nervousness on the part of this big continent, with only 12 million people at the time, only 350 miles away from Indonesia, an aggressive Muslim nation of Indonesia with 150 million people.

One of my jobs in Australia was attempting to put Indonesia in perspective for them. I did a lot of this. For example, I became quite a customer for the Parliament; their foreign affairs committee would ask me to brief them, which I did about once every two months. They were appreciative of the fact that I was sharing my views about Indonesia with them. What I was telling them was that basically I did not think this “confrontation” on the part of Sukarno was going anywhere except what I call slightly beyond the limits of propaganda, that it was not going to be a lethal threat to Australia. They didn't quite buy that because many of them really felt that the Indonesians were inevitably going to be the main enemy.

Q: This is Tape 2 of an interview with Ambassador Jack Lydman.

LYDMAN: Anyway, that was I thought an interesting part of my assignment in Australia which provided a linkage between my Southeast Asian experience and something the Australians found themselves deeply involved in.

Q: You're finding yourself having dealt with really the principal players in this particular area, Indonesia, Australia, and now we move to Malaysia. You were appointed Ambassador there in 1969.

LYDMAN: Yes.

Q: That would be under President Nixon.

LYDMAN: That was under President Nixon, indeed.

Q: And how did that come about?

LYDMAN: I don't know why they fixed on me to be the candidate for Malaysia except that I do know I was the leading candidate of our own bureau in Washington, but appointments to Ambassadorship seldom follow the suggestions of the Department of State, as you know. But this one happened to. And I was very grateful for it because I had come from the experience with Marshall Green in Indonesia and with the previous experience in Australia, the experience in Thailand, the experience with the SEATO organization, with all of these things which provided a good background for what was now going to be I thought a rather challenging job because it was the Vietnam war and how did an American Ambassador do his job with this thing right next door to him?

Q: We're talking about, Nixon was just coming in.

LYDMAN: That's right.

Q: Beginning to look for a way to get out of the war.

LYDMAN: Absolutely. The problem was keeping the Malaysian government informed as to what was going on in Vietnam, what we were up to, what we were doing, what everybody else was doing, with an effort to try and keep their attention on all of the facts as they were developing. The Malaysians were understandably nervous, as you can imagine, about everything that was going on in Vietnam. They were terribly nervous about the strength of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party under Ho Chi Minh. They were nervous about the alignment of the Ho forces with China and with the Soviet Union. They had been fighting their own Communist guerrilla warfare for many, many years. Now this is '69,

they had been fighting that warfare ever since 1948. So they were up to their eyeballs in Communism.

Q: So you didn't have to sell them on it?

LYDMAN: You didn't have to sell them on anti-Communism at all. But on the other side of this coin, they were anti-colonialists. And they were uncomfortable by the presence of the United States in a Southeast Asian country pulling the kind of muscle that we were pulling. It was difficult for them to not to have a rather strong suspicion that our effort was not only to protect the non-Communist forces of Vietnam against Communist forces, but it was in fact to consolidate an American influence in that country.

You know, these are the underlying traumas that you will find all through Southeast Asia. I suppose you find it through all former colonial areas. No matter what the facts seem to be, there's a underlying suspicion about the bona fides of ex-colonialist powers, always will be.

Fortunately, again, terribly lucky in the kind of leadership that I fell into in these assignments. The George Washington of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman was still Prime Minister. He had been Prime Minister since the very beginning, since '57; this was '69. He was an old established institution, absolutely confident of his role in his own country, very relaxed, marvelous kind of Edwardian figure. Delightful in every way, not really your picture of the average Southeast Asian leader. He was a prince of the royal family of Kedah in the North. He had been accepted to the bar in London. It took him many years to do that because he had such a good time in London he wasn't forcing his exams. But he finally got through, was pushed through. Came back, was a political animal from the very beginning, got along famously with the British, loved a lot of the things that the British loved, like racing horses, beautiful women, good Scotch whiskey, roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, and all of the nice things that an Edwardian gentleman should appreciate.

He was an agile manipulator of the political scene. He knew instinctively that his principal job was to allay the fears and suspicions of ethnic minorities of which of course Malaysia is

composed a great deal. Less than 50 percent of the country are Malays, some 35 percent are Chinese, and 15 percent Indian.

Q: There had been some serious anti-Chinese riots just before you arrived.

LYDMAN: It was just before I arrived, that's right. The Tunku thought he had pulled all of the races together. The deal he had made with the Chinese leaders, for example, at the very beginning of 1957, was that in return for political hegemony for the Malays, the Chinese were to get economic laissez faire and that was a deal that the Chinese just bought, enjoyed and they all got richer, at least the in-group. And the Malay in-group also did pretty well.

But the riots in '69 brought another element into this. They were important because they reflected a generational change in attitudes. There are three kinds of changes that take place in any political system. One is secular change, which happens all the time, routinely. Another is generational change that only happens when generations change. And the third is revolutionary change, which is quite violent, or can be violent.

Well the racial riots in '69 were a result of a generational change. Young Malays were dissatisfied that they were not getting their share of economic benefits or even of political benefits, because the political benefits had been pretty much reserved for an in-group of political elites. Economic benefits were concentrated in the Chinese community, for the most part. At the same time, younger Chinese were also dissatisfied; not because they were deprived of economic access but because they were deprived of educational and political access. They were denied in their estimation participation at meaningful level in the government, in the bureaucracy, in the Parliament, and denied equal access in schools and universities. They also felt deprived that the Chinese language was being increasingly corseted and made more and more just a kind of ethnic language not to be used either officially or in educational institutions.

Q: I want to return a little more to your role when you were there as Ambassador. What did we do except to sit and look at the situation and say this may mean trouble? What did we want from Malaysia?

LYDMAN: We wanted a lot of things from them. First of all, there wasn't much you could do about the internal political turmoil, that was definitely their problem.

Q: USIA didn't get involved in that?

LYDMAN: Absolutely not. I made sure that they didn't.

Q: Did we have a Chinese program and a Malaysian program?

LYDMAN: We had a Malaysian program and we made very, very certain that we were not having communal programs. We didn't have Malay programs, we didn't have Chinese programs. We had English programs.

Q: So you got around that particular booby-trap.

LYDMAN: Absolutely. I made sure that we weren't, and I made sure that we never expressed opinions one way or another about who was on top, why, or anything like it. And I was extremely careful never to give any impression that we sympathized with one communal group or another.

Q: Did you meet everybody sort of equally?

LYDMAN: Yes. And I made sure all through these troubled times that in my house I had a balanced representation of the ethnic groups. I had Chinese and Indians and Malays and Arabs. And I had them together so they could see that the house was an all-Malaysian house and no favoritism whatsoever.

Q: What were our goals, your goals?

LYDMAN: We wanted the support, the psychological support, if not active support, of the Malaysian government for our role in Southeast Asia, particularly in Vietnam. Also, we wanted Malaysia as much as possible to be part of a free world shadow defense system regionally which would include Indonesia and probably the Philippines and Thailand. We encouraged, for example, joint exercises against Communist guerrillas on the Thai-Malay border, and on the Indonesian-Malay border. We also encouraged standardization of weapons and equipment in their armed forces. We obviously were eager to sell our stuff to them, to all of them, but even more than that we tried to carry the message that standardization was in their interest.

There was a tendency in Malaysia to throw over the traces of the Five Power Alliance which had been barely limping along. Still the New Zealanders had an engineer battalion in Singapore. The Australians had a wing of fighter planes in Butterworth, across from Penangin, Malaysia. The Australians had a colony of about 3,000 people in Penang. There was a feeling among Malaysians that this was an extraterritorial intrusion by Australia and it really wasn't doing Malaysia any good. And there was a lot of talk in Parliament that they ought to get rid of this. We quietly supported their keeping it there because it was clearly in their own interest to keep that screen, particularly in light of the events going on in Indochina. And that was the course of action that they bought. Interestingly, the Australians are still in Butterworth.

Q: Did we see ourselves, and you as an Ambassador, see, okay, no matter what happens in Vietnam, the scab around the wound of Indochina is beginning to harden? Because it certainly looked like the domino theory had validity at a certain point.

LYDMAN: Yes. And we believed that.

Q: But you saw that you were developing another line of defense? I mean, was this something you were looking towards that, say, if Indochina did not turn out the way we

hoped it would you would at least have countries that were feeling confident that they could contain it?

LYDMAN: We never for one minute thought—we never gave any alternatives about what might happen in Vietnam. You had to more or less single-handedly focus on the fact that Vietnam and Indochina generally was in the process of a very determined Communist takeover. You had to remind the Malaysians the reason we were there was to try to prevent that. But in any case, so long as that kind of a strong and determined Communist movement existed in Southeast Asia, they ought to take precautions against what might happen in the future. That was the message. We weren't making any predictions what was going to happen in Vietnam, not in 1969 and '70. We didn't know what was going to happen in South Vietnam at that point. We didn't know what was going to happen in Vietnam until almost the day I left, which was in '74.

We also I think had made quite a point to the Malaysians with our support effort for the Indonesians in 1966. That I think very much impressed the Malaysians. The way we supported Suharto and the rehabilitation of that country and the restoration to political stability. We were important there, there's no doubt about it. And they knew it. We had both their respect and a certain degree of confidence in what we were up to because of that experience.

Q: We were not playing sort of second fiddle to the United Kingdom or to Australia?

LYDMAN: Not at all. But we deliberately kept our head down. We did not want to become the new image of the Raj, absolutely not.

Q: Did you have any problems with your staff in this regard?

LYDMAN: No.

Q: Good staff?

LYDMAN: Good staff. Yes.

Q: How about instructions from Washington?

LYDMAN: I wouldn't exactly say that Malaysia was in the forefront of the seventh floor at any time.

Q: Seventh floor being the—

LYDMAN: That's the Secretary..

Q: The Secretary dwells.

LYDMAN: The only time I could get the seventh floor involved was because I was bullish about the possibility of joint ventures. We were responsible for bringing in the American electronic industry there. And supported and encouraged the entry of some 23 different American electronics companies into Malaysia during the time I was there. By the time I left they were employing something like 18,000 people which was quite an impact on that country. I am proud of that. And it was a good deal, it still is. We still I think have the biggest employment group in Penang, which is the main center of the electronics business. I wanted us to get involved with all of the Southeast Asian countries. Because I felt that they were on the threshold of very substantial development, all of them. Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia. Sure enough, right after the Vietnam war was over they had the most incredible growth that any region has ever had. So I felt more than compensated for what I had urged and supported.

Q: How did they feel about two things when you were there that you had to deal with? One was our opening to China, which was quite a shock of course to Japan. And the other was the situation, although it was not the end in Vietnam, the fact that we were pulling out. But, anyway, China first.

LYDMAN: Before I get to China, let me tell you, there are other somewhat sensitive points and it is something that ought to be mentioned. For example, when they started the regional group, ASEAN, in 1967, we were very iffy about it. We thought it was going to be a facade for a neutralism group and we were dead against anything that smacked of neutrality or neutralism, just as much as we were against anything that was anti-nuclear. Well, you know, there was a certain kind of what I call subcutaneous bombast about American policy in those days. And it was not easy to reconcile that kind of firm position with what I felt was really the future. From the very beginning I felt we should endorse ASEAN. I saw no contradiction whatsoever in what they called their zone of peace and neutrality which wasn't going to happen overnight anyway with our basic objectives. But you know, we were in a war in Vietnam and Henry Kissinger had the flexibility of a Bismarck on this issue. It was frustrating for me not to be able to reconcile the direction in which they wanted to go with where we were and where we were going. It wasn't until about '77 or so when we began to support ASEAN.

Q: Was there anyone in Washington that you tried to talk to on this?

LYDMAN: Oh, yes. Many people. Henry for one.

Q: Henry Kissinger.

LYDMAN: I knew Henry from the Rockefeller days.

Q: But you got no real response?

LYDMAN: No encouragement. Well, I can understand that. People were preoccupied with other things.

The next thing you had in mind was the opening to China. Yes. When that happened there was a mixed reaction of expectations and apprehensions. The Malaysian decided to play it cool, don't get involved, just watch it and see what happens.

Q: For them?

LYDMAN: For them.

Q: They had no relations with China?

LYDMAN: Not at that point. They soon thereafter established diplomatic relations. But this was all very tentative. They weren't going to get involved. They were not going to follow the lead of Indonesia but they were responsive to Indonesia's position, which was hands off, no relations with China.

Q: So Malaysia is always looking over its shoulder—

LYDMAN: At Indonesia, there's no question about that. And they're following Djakarta's lead most of the time. There were a lot of visits to China, but there's pitifully small trade and I don't think there are many other contacts. And that's also a reflection of the fact that the Malays don't like the Chinese in their own country. So you've got this problem there.

I think they were pleased that we had restored our relations with China because this removed much of the thrust of the victorious Communist Vietnam. Once you got China on an adversarial border, then you sort of took the heat off Thailand and Malaysia. They were happy about that.

Q: You were the person who had to explain to the Malaysians all our dealings as you got instructions.

LYDMAN: Of course.

Q: Whom did you talk to, by the way?

LYDMAN: You had the Foreign Minister, of course, for the most part. They changed while I was there, but I had good relations with them. And the Permanent Secretary, the head

of the foreign service, was also a political animal and a good conduit. And I saw the Prime Minister almost every week.

Q: So he was not aloof?

LYDMAN: Oh, no. I used to have tea with the Prime Minister on Thursdays, usually, alone. I would come at the end of his day, which was about 4:30 or 5:00 and we would have a cup of tea, very relaxed. They all called me Jack. You know, that doesn't necessarily mean familiarity, but the first name is the name that you call people by in Muslim countries Some people think that this is familiarity. It isn't all that much. But I must tell you one little anecdote which explains in a way what Southeast Asians are about. I got to know Tun Abdul Razak, who was the next Prime Minister after Tunku Abdul Rahman, fairly well. Razak was a great guy and a good administrator. I had tea with him one day when he said, “Jack, you won't believe what's happened this week?” And I said, “Well, what was it Tun?” He said, “You know, we're going to have a summit meeting of ASEAN in Djakarta next week.” I said, “Yes, I know that.” And he said, “Well, you won't believe it, but my Ambassador in Canberra let me know that Mr. Whitlam—who was the Prime Minister in Australia at that time—had a press conference and told the press that he was attending the ASEAN summit meeting in Djakarta. “ Razak said, “I hadn't heard about this.” And, he said, “I thought that was rather strange so I got on the telephone to Suharto who was going to be the host for this meeting and I said Suharto, I've just had this report. And Suharto hadn't heard it and said, I'll look into it right away. And he looked into it and got back on the telephone in less than an hour. Ah, he said, we have told Mr. Whitlam that he is not invited. And he said, don't worry, he won't be there.” And so Razak looked at me and said, “Can you imagine? Whitlam at our little meeting? You know all of us people,” he said, “we're all little fellows, none of us more than 5'6 and, we all have gentle voices and are gentle people. And, he said, “you know Whitlam?” I said, “Yes, sir, I do.” He said, “How tall is he?” I said,” I think he's 6'5””. He said, “Can you imagine this giant, you've heard Whitlam?” I said, “Yes, sir. Everybody has heard Whitlam. He's got a voice like a fog horn,

you know, from the back benches of Parliament. He says, can you imagine this giant with that voice with us little fellows in a room? And he laughed. I've always remembered that.

Q: I would like to just ask one further question. What would you say was sort of your greatest personal achievement that you feel while you were in the Foreign Service?

LYDMAN: You know, that's an almost impossible question. I think that maybe the greatest personal achievement in all the assignments and from the very beginning—in addition to survival, of course, which is an achievement. I think the fact that I really feel I did a little bit to increase the understanding of people who are quite different culturally in Southeast Asia with Americans. And, you know, this, when the roll is called up yonder, may not amount to a hill of beans, but I thought it was a real achievement. That's it.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, I want to thank you very much.

LYDMAN: Not at all, Stuart. I enjoyed it very much.

End of interview